

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius  
A sermon preached by Father Bradford on The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent  
March 14, 2021

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Prior to the healing of the man born blind, Our Lord Jesus had just emerged from a tense confrontation in the Temple precincts, where He had narrowly escaped from being stoned to death. Anyone else would have been completely occupied with personal safety and the desire to get out of there quickly. But on His way out of the Temple the Lord saw a man who was blind from his birth. Not only did the Lord stop to show compassion to this man. He also determined to use this cure to seek once more the conversion of the very people who minutes earlier had been eager to murder Him! One of the hallmarks of St John's Gospel is his remembrance of God Incarnate as totally fearless, and as never giving up in His desire for the salvation of souls.

Last Sunday we heard about the Samaritan woman at the well. The narrative showed qualities of detail only an eyewitness could provide. St John, or his source, must have been *on the spot*. It is the same with the details involving the cure of the man born blind. What is noteworthy is that the blind man's healing involved *props* and things for him to do. On other occasions it is *a word from Christ*, (sometimes from a remote distance), that signals the healing. So why then the making of the salve and anointing of the eyes? And why the instruction to wash in the pool of Siloam?

The answer is that the Lord Jesus *does for us what we need*. Remember the prophet Samuel once announced to Jesse at Bethlehem "The Lord does not see as man sees, but looks on the heart." (*I Sam 16:7*) Blessed Jesus had never before seen this blind beggar in the Temple precincts. But He knew what was needed for the blind man's soul. This man needed to be made uneasy with his blindness.

When my younger sister had meningitis at age eighteen it left her with total hearing loss. But the audiologists told her that during her lifetime a solution would be found. And it was, the cochlear implant. But after having been deaf for thirty years my sister was not sure she wanted to hear again. She had to become uneasy with her deafness. She did, and she had the successful implant surgery. Her hesitation reminded me that in 1945 the inmates of the newly-liberated Singapore jail and the German concentration camps did not automatically want freedom. They had become uneasy with the cruel treatment of prisoners of war. In the same

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way, you and I need to be made uneasy with our sins, and then we can be healed. That is the way it was with the man born blind. That is why the eye salve clay made by Jesus actually *sealed* the man's eyes rather than opening them. Any residual bit of light was blocked out. Christ seemed to be *destroying* rather than *restoring* the beggar's vision. And then in that condition he was instructed to go through the city and wash in Siloam. Think of what a silly and pathetic sight it appeared to the Jerusalem crowd! This blind beggar was on a fool's errand for a man named Jesus Who had just missed being stoned by the crowd! A blind man can still hear the laughter of the multitude. It took courage to accept the Gospel good news. But part of the good news is the Gospel has no interest in the derisive snickering of the crowd! From one end of the Bible to the other the crowd is in the way.

The Lord used His power and grace to heal the beggar. But the blind beggar had his part to play in the healing. He went to the pool of Siloam, looking to the world very much like a fool, but confident in Christ's power to save. And the Lord treats us the same way. How often we are perplexed before we are illumined. How often the crowd, the current secular mind-set, gets in the way. And the Lord so often leaves a soul in intellectual darkness for a time before He grants such a vision of truth that by comparison we seem to have been blind up until then.

We no longer use clay salve. And the pool of Siloam is long gone. The remedy for our blind souls is to wash in the Precious Blood of Jesus. By penitence and the medicines of Christ's Church, we come to behold Jesus with a clearness we have never had up until now. After having been with Jesus, the man born blind declared to the world "That whereas I was blind, now I see." Those words are part of the vocabulary of every disciple of Jesus Christ.